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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 000888

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2017

TAGS: PREL CH BM AF

SUBJECT: DAS CHRISTENSEN DISCUSSES BURMA WITH MFA ASIAN AFFAIRS DG HU ZHENGYUE

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Dan Shields. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) EAP DAS Thomas Christensen underscored the need for continued international attention to Burma in a meeting with MFA Asian Affairs Director General Hu Zhengyue on February 6. The United States was disappointed by China's veto of the Security Council resolution on Burma. China should find ways to promote reform in Burma. The United States is ready to discuss these issues with China, he noted. DG Hu said cooperation on Burma should be an important part of closer coordination between the United States and China on Asian affairs. China continues to urge Burmese leaders to seek national reconciliation and believes that ASEAN and the United Nations, but not the Security Council, can play a constructive role on Burma. DAS Christensen asked whether China pressed Burmese General Thura Shwe Mann on reform last week when he visited China. DG Hu said General Thura Shwe Mann met with Premier Wen and Chinese military leaders and Chinese officials urged the regime to respond to international concerns, but also repeated China's standard positions about not interfering in Burma's internal affairs. DAS Christensen asked Hu about his perceptions of the Burmese regime's relations with Aung San Suu Kyi. DG Hu responded that the regime does not see her as a threat. Even if she were in power she would not be able to lead the country effectively, given the complexity of the problems Burma faces, DG Hu said. DAS Christensen said it is the current Burmese regime, not Aung San Suu Kyi, that has demonstrated a lack of capacity to handle the complexities of the challenges that face Burma. End Summary.

¶2. (C) EAP DAS Christensen expressed continuing United States' concern about the situation in Burma and underscored the need for continued international attention to Burma during a February 6 meeting with Asian Affairs DG Hu Zhengyue. The United States was disappointed by China's decision to veto the resolution on Burma in the United Nations. China

should find ways to promote reform in Burma. The United States is ready to discuss these issues with China, he noted. DG Hu said cooperation on Burma should be an important part of closer coordination between the United States and China on Asian affairs.

MFA Sees a Role for UN, but Not UNSC, on Burma

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¶3. (C) DG Hu said China believes the United Nations should continue to play a role on Burma, but not through the Security Council. China has urged Burma to take seriously international concerns about Burma's national reconciliation and in response the Burmese have told Chinese officials that they are willing to continue to have a dialogue with U/SYG Gambari, Hu said.

¶4. (C) DG Hu stated that Burma's neighbors, including China, India and Thailand, have a common view that political reconciliation between the regime and the opposition parties and consolidation of the security situation with respect to armed groups in minority regions of Burma are significant issues. China and India consult closely on Burma and see eye-to-eye on the need to address Burma's problems through engagement, not isolation. ASEAN countries recognize that Burma's internal problems hinder ASEAN's relations with the international community. ASEAN is motivated to try to improve Burma's international standing, DG Hu said.

Visit by General Thura Shwe Mann

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¶5. (C) DAS Christensen asked whether China pressed Burmese General Thura Shwe Mann on reform last week when he visited China. DG Hu said General Thura Shwe Mann met with Premier Wen and Chinese military leaders. General Thura Shwe Mann and a Burmese Vice Foreign Minister discussed the regime's "roadmap" with Chinese officials, while China explained the international community's concern about Burma's domestic situation, urging the Burmese to address internal problems and to think of ways to improve their relations with the international community. Chinese leaders repeated standard positions about not interfering in Burma's internal affairs. China believes the best way to influence Burma is by talking with its leaders. Beijing has invited various Burmese leaders to visit China but few have come, perhaps because they are busy addressing internal issues. Beijing believes international pressure on Burma is counterproductive, causing the regime to be less willing to address national reconciliation and to take a harder line toward calls for democratic reform, DG Hu said.

Aung San Suu Kyi

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¶6. (C) DAS Christensen asked about Hu's perceptions of the Burmese regime's relations with Aung San Suu Kyi and the prospects for reconciliation between the regime and the democratic parties. DG Hu responded that the regime does not see Aung San Suu Kyi as a threat. Even if she were in power she would not be able to lead the country effectively, given the complexity of the problems Burma faces, Hu said. DAS Christensen said Burma's problems are indeed complex, but it is the current Burmese regime, not Aung San Suu Kyi, that has demonstrated a lack of capacity to handle the complexities of the challenges that face Burma.

¶7. (C) DAS Christensen rejected the idea that it will be possible to get results in Burma without outside pressure. Burma's problems have become regional problems, DAS Christensen emphasized, noting the spread of drugs and infectious diseases like AIDS. DG Hu said that China is seeking to influence Burma by sharing China's economic experiences with visiting Burmese leaders and by encouraging Burmese minority groups to adopt strategies that emphasize alternatives to poppy cultivation. The UN participates in some of these programs, Hu said, noting that China believes similar drug crop replacement programs can be effective in Afghanistan. Through engagement between local groups in China and Burma, the Chinese central government promotes replacement crops, such as sugar, in part by providing markets in China for these replacement crops, he said. China has donated grain to Burma to prevent food shortages in areas seeking to move out of the drug trade, he added. DAS Christensen asked whether China places conditions on food aid or checks to ensure that the recipient areas have stopped growing poppies. DG Hu said there is no direct conditionality to Chinese assistance. The food products exported to China, however, are evidence that replacement crops have been planted.

¶8. (U) DAS Christensen cleared this message.  
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